Interspecies Communication

Newsletter Spring-Summer 1986

Human/Dolphin Community

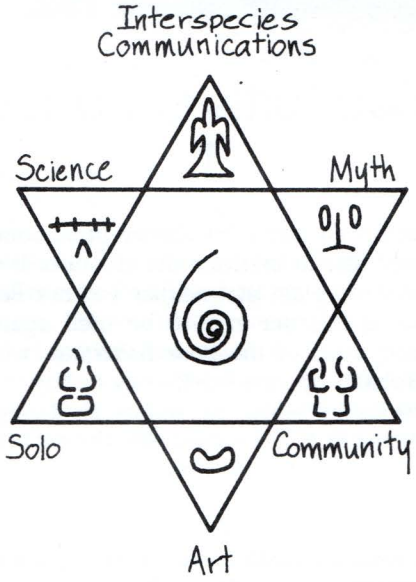
In Mexico

Three years ago, a few of our Interspecies core members spent the winter working with dolphins at the tropical resort of Careyes, along the Pacific coast of Mexico. After four intensive months of transmitting live music into the water, we had succeeded in coaxing a pod of six spotted dolphins to meet us regularly about a mile from shore. Our only enticements were live music, and then later, in water play. The ongoing event at Careyes was initiated as the first phase in the eventual formation of a Human/Dolphin community.

This very promising but short-lived project came to an abrupt end for one reason alone: human beings cannot presume to make the conscious leap into interspecies community until they, themselves, are capable of interacting with one another from the basis of intra-community. Careyes generated media activity and lively speculation about leading the dolphins into shore to interact with children. This caused an underlying pressure to produce an instant community. At the same time we were immersed in a struggle just to develop the relationship at the speed that the dolphins, themselves, were setting for us. The situation was consequently not workable, and the entire scheme collapsed.

Yet, despite the anticlimactic ending, we had learned some very valuable lessons. Firstly, we possessed the skills and methods needed to initiate and nurture a relationship with wild cetaceans where none seemingly had ever existed before. Secondly, we were convinced that the concept of the Human/Dolphin community—a place where humans could interact with free swimming dolphins, the two species coevolving with one another—was a project that we wanted to promote and sponsor. And yes, we were well aware of the responsibilities implicit in such a relationship.

In the three years since Careyes, I.C. has sponsored at least one project every winter in search of a new site from which to instigate a Human/Dolphin community. Southeast Florida, the Bahama Banks, Hawaii, and the Great

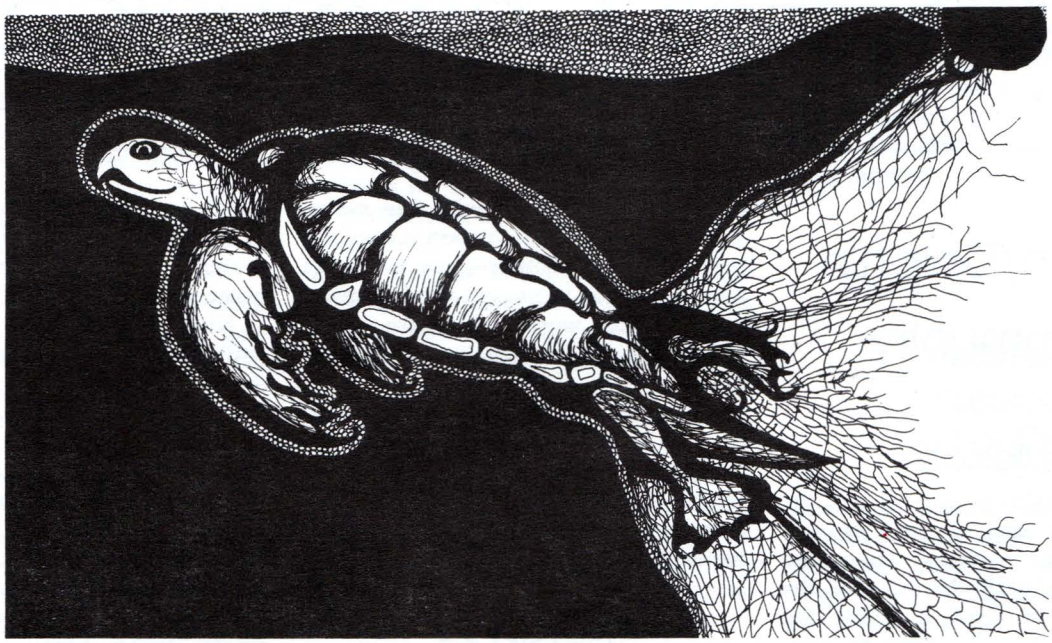


Barrier Reef in Australia have all been explored. In many cases I.C. listens for the best way to support and encourage the interactions between dolphins and humans already taking place in various parts of the world. Such was the case in our visits to Lake Tyers and Monkey Mia, Australia where pods of dolphins have interacted with humans on the shore. I.C. members have also spent time with American Indian and Aboriginal teachers learning both of their relationships with dolphins and of their sacred places of dreaming. However, for the purpose of our research and vision, we seek an area where the human factor is not already overwhelming. We seek a warm water sandy beach on a protected bay in proximity to resident dolphins where there is no evidence of a prior relationship between species.

Nine members of I.C. have just returned from two weeks in Baja. On the desert sea environment north of La Paz, we explored the area's potential for interspecies community. It was a time spent sailing from island to island, bay to bay, walking beaches and kayaking through mangrove estuaries. We learned the capricious power of the local winds and the environmental concerns of the local people. We enjoyed a single strong interaction with bottlenose dolphins, and had two other such experiences with sea lions. We took care to explain our motives to Mexican collaborators, who expressed a strong concern to initiate a project that will speak to the preservation of the local wildlife. A total of eleven human beings living with tight quarters but good spirits for two weeks aboard a forty-six foot sailboat, reminded us again of the importance in our work of developing and maintaining open and clear human communication.

After two weeks, we succeeded in locating two promising sites. Joined with an invitation to explore another nearby site next winter, we have decided to return to Mexico in 1987 to commence the next phase of this long term project.

The Sea of Cortez is a vast and fecund wilderness area, and the seasonal home to many species of whales, dolphins, reptiles, and birds that are endangered in other parts of the world. Unfortunately, this is all changing as developers and tourists discover its incredible richness and natural beauty. Furthermore, much illegal and indiscriminate fishing and poaching occurs (we heard explosions from dynamite fishing several times); and thus the turtles, sea lions, and marlin are fast disappearing. I.C.'s program of benign research in the area of direct communication between humans and dolphins, sea lions, and whales hopes to be a means of promoting careful preservation of this region.



Two Turtle Episodes

I

January. Traveling south, just off the coast in the Sea of Cortez with two grizzled American fishermen in their spaceship of a powerboat; looking for dolphins, eyes peeled to the shoreline, searching for that elusive cove that appears so promising on the charts. The wind comes up in a fury; from flat calm to a howling gale in less than fifteen minutes. We swing around the point and into a beautiful bay that sweeps back into the cactus-filled arroyos of the Sierra Gigante. Ted, the older of the two retired gentlemen, taps Ben on the shoulder as he spies a net strung between a rocky reef and the lee shore. There is an animal struggling in the net, whose head pops up and then down as we watch. Ted zooms the boat in for a closer look, and starts cussing to no one in particular as he identifies the creature as Caguama, the beautiful green turtle, that is fast disappearing from the oceans of the world. Before I can even get a closer look at the thrashing animal, the boat has been maneuvered into position beside the net, and Ben is up on the bow with a jackknife in hand, slashing at the threads. I'm off balance, hardly expecting such a fast reaction without so much as a word of discussion. I too want the turtle freed, but I would go just a bit slower in deciding how best to extricate the creature. It is only too plain that neither Ted nor Ben wants this net ever to be used again. And what of the poor fisherman who probably spent a week's pay to buy this device by which he wrests his living? Strung as it is, I reckon that the net was set to catch the grouper, bass, and pompano who frequent the reef. To catch a turtle is an accident—although a welcome addition to the family cooking pot.

The turtle is wrapped up like a meatball in a huge mound of spaghetti. More so, it is bleeding from several wounds where the monofilament has cut into its flesh. I am suddenly awakened to the fact that this turtle would have drowned within the next hour. I run up onto the front bow to find Ben totally out of breath. I take his jackknife and begin slashing away as Ben guides the net up in my direction. Finally, the two of us heave together, and lift the entangled turtle right out of the water and up onto the deck. Ten minutes of steady cut and untie, and finally the turtle is freed. We place the animal onto its back. Ben is bleeding, I'm chilled. But we look at each other and start giggling like two schoolboys caught up in some devilish deed. The net is pushed over the side, cut into too many pieces to be worth repairing. Ted zooms the boat a half-mile more to the south and stops. I pick up the thirty-pound turtle and heave it into the water like some interspecies shotputter. The animal surfaces and then swims away. Elation. We saved the turtle.

Later, I am unable to erase the expression on the face of my invented fisherman as he comes in a day, in a week, to inspect his net. Long ago, at Iki Island, Japan, I learned that lasting changes in environmental consciousness only occur when the locals, themselves, learn that it is to their own benefit to protect their environment. The alternative is a deep resentment, and an acceleration of illegal poaching.

And what of the turtle? In a day, a week, a decade: to end up in some other fisherman's net? Do turtles learn from their mistakes? Might this Caguama not have learned to avoid monofilament? Ultimately, I feel more heartened by the sight of the free-swimming turtle, than by the fisherman's intact net. There the matter lies. Resolved, but not yet resting in peace.

II

April. Same general area. A different group of people. Six of us have left the boat to sleep on a shell-studded beach. In the morning, Chip rows the dinghy to shore to pick us up. His first words are disturbing. Evidently, late last night a group of local fishermen visited our boat, requesting our Mexican skipper to deliver a huge green turtle back to La Paz. The turtle will go to a professor at the university, who needs it for an ongoing research project.

These fishermen had earlier granted us permission to clam along their reef. More so, just yesterday, they had given us ten gallons from their own precious store of gasoline. We had all been grateful for their kindness. Now it is only too clear that they expect us to deliver the turtle as a favor to them. Chip takes care to accentuate the issue of *simpatico;* asking all of us to consider the cultural implications of the fishermen's request. Christoph speaks up. He believes that we should take the turtle, as a gesture in support of scientific research. He states that this particular turtle may aid the future cause of all Baja turtles.

But the rest of us aren't so sure. Mela expresses a gut reaction of nausea over the reality of transporting a live and vigorous turtle in the 2' by 2' hold of our boat for at least three and possibly four more days. Mary Clayton reacts strongly to Christoph's presumption of benign laboratory research. She cannot abide the very concept of laboratory research on animals, and does not want us to show support for the general system by offering our boat as a transport mechanism. And what about the particular "research" to be levied upon this individual turtle? The fisherman had been honest in stating that he had no idea what the professor was studying. Futhermore, he had admitted that no one had ever said what would happen to the turtle once the research was concluded. I question the validity of any research that demonstrates no concern for subjugating a vigorous animal to the tiny dark prison of our hold for days at a time. I speculate on the worst possibilities of such research: the turtle dissected by the professor for a room full of second-year biology students; or any of several hundred other experiments that have been replicated a thousand times in the science labs of the world.

We bring the matter to a vote. The "nays" win the day. Since our Mexican skipper has sincerely solicited our opinion about the matter, we have voted that the turtle cannot be carried by our boat back to La Paz. We also decide, that if the moment seems diplomatically correct, we shall offer to buy the turtle from the fishermen, with the stated aim of returning it back to the sea.

Back at the boat, the skipper stares at me incredulously as I boldly announce that we, as a group, have agreed not to transport the turtle. He reminds me of the great favor the fishermen had done us with the clams, with the gas. The fishermen who have tied their boat to our gunwhale nod their heads in agreement. I thank the fishermen, but then state that clams are one thing, and a sea turtle is another. The moment is charged.

After intense discussion, the embarrassed skipper tells me that he will abide by our group's decision. The fishermen shake their heads. I look at my hands. The skipper turns to the fishermen and tells them to get the turtle out of the hold. My jaw opens. I am more than a little surprised to learn that the deed has already been done. The two muscular fishermen stride to the stern and grunt and groan as they extricate what proves to be the very largest green turtle I have ever seen in my life. It is easily five times the size of the turtle caught in the net three months earlier. This Caguama could be that other turtle's great, great grandmother, counting a lifespan of a hundred years or more. It is much too large to fit in our hold flat on its back.

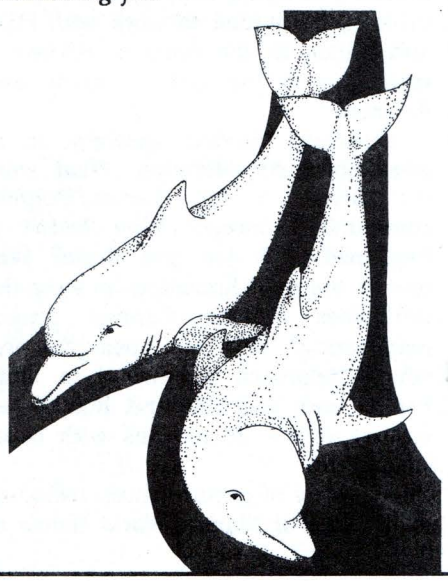
The fishermen hoist the turtle into the fishing boat where it is unceremoniously deposited upon its back with a loud clatter. As a fisherman smiles up at me, job completed, I hesitatingly mention that our group offers to buy the turtle in order to set it free. He squints into the sun and shakes his head. No, sorry, this turtle is not for sale. He reiterates that the animal had been caught only for the purpose of research. From the tone in his voice, I am made aware that this man gives much power to his collaboration with the university professor. No hard feelings. We shake hands. Soon he motors off, no doubt in search of some other boat willing to transport the ancient Caguama across one hundred miles of water to La Paz.

Days pass slowly on the water, long hot and sunny days, filled with vistas of exquisitely bizarre landforms, manta rays somersaulting from the water like so much popcorn in a kettle, hikes along memorable beaches littered with the skeletons of long dead creatures, both known and unknown. One morning, now much closer to La Paz, we encounter and then interact with a pod of twenty dolphins.

And significantly, none of us is able to shake the phantom presence of the old turtle. Imagine, days later, had it not been for our own stubborn forcefulness of purpose, there it would lie upended and thrashing in the torture chamber of our own storage hold. Everyone wonders how any of us might help the cause of turtles. Discussions arise to scan the arena of all possibilities. In my own humble estimation the prize goes to this one: Print a broadside in both Spanish and English that delineates the complex issue of turtle economics. Include with it a list of all the restaurants in La Paz, Loreto, Mulege, Guaymas, Cabo and Mazatlán that serve turtle on its menu. Plead for a boycott. Post the broadside in hotels, and in restaurants that don't serve turtle. Alert travel agents. Hand it to every Gringo in sight.

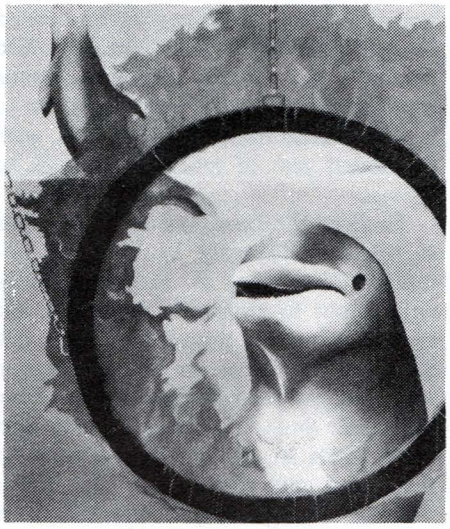
Jim Nollman

Jim Nollman's book, Dolphin Dreamtime, *originally published in England, will be available through Bantam Books this coming fall.*



Human/Dolphin Community

Our Friends in Captivity



From a painting by Colleen Kelley

Five years ago, two Atlantic bottlenose dolphins were captured in the Gulf of Mexico to participate for several years in a human-dolphin communication program. Dr. John Lilly and his colleagues hoped to develop a new model for human-dolphin interactions through computer analysis of dolphin vocalizations, whereby a common human-dolphin language could be identified. Release of "Joe" and "Rosie" back to the wild was part of the initial plan.

Under the sponsorship of the Human Dolphin Foundation (HDF), this program brought new dimensions to human appreciation of dolphin behavior and intelligence. Within the scientific community, the HDF program inspired new directions for communication research. Within the general public, Joe and Rosie became symbols of human-animal relationships that reached beyond scientific research and public display identities. A number of individuals visited and swam with them over the years, and today speak of the dolphins as part of their family. Many gave extensive volunteer hours and personal resources in appreciation of the contribution Joe and Rosie were making to a clearer understanding of our relationship to each other and to our environment.

Over the years the interest in an open-gate situation and release program seemed to grow. Alan Slifka, one of the original participants of HDF, as well as of I.C., began looking for ways to broaden the support for this direction. Many proposals and dreams of island retreats for the HDF family were passed around and yet none seemed to manifest. Virginia Coyle, one of the initiators of community within the I.C. projects, committed to work with HDF and Slifka, in the hope of finding a resolution to the lack of funds and direction.

Questions needed answers or at least closer consideration. What were the barriers to the Human/Dolphin community concept? Why hadn't it happened with Joe and Rosie? Was money the only limitation or were the difficulties of the Careyes project reappearing? Was the open-gate and release approach something to truly benefit both dolphins and humans as well as future interactions with other species?

A variety of circumstances, including the closing of Marine World (home of Joe and Rosie) and the recent death of Toni Lilly, led to the termination of the HDF research program. At the request of the foundation, Coyle, Slifka, Jim Hickman and Carol Ely undertook a six-month study of possible futures for Joe and Rosie to insure their continued well-being.

In October 1985, O.R.C.A. (Oceanic Research and Communication Alliance) was established under the Tides Foundation to sponsor this work and assume responsibility for the care of the two dolphins. The promise of release after a period of service, something held in the hearts and minds of many HDF constituents since their capture in 1981, was found to still be a primary intention and hope. O.R.C.A. also discovered other individuals within government agencies and commercial dolphin operations interested in such an activity. Although a number of dolphins had been released prior to the 1972 Marine Mammal Protection Act, the newer protective legislation discourages such action. The high cost of purchasing dolphins, along with limits on new captures, raised additional reasons to keep dolphins permanently in captivity. Without documentation on successful release, hesitation and caution inhibited most cases of curiosity.

After six months of exploring the considerations around various options, O.R.C.A. feels it is, with Joe and Rosie, in a unique position to make a contribution to research on release and readaptation to the wild. Though release cannot be assured as the outcome (Joe and Rosie will make their own choices), we believe that such a project will catalyze more interest in the possibilities of open-gate relationships among all people working with cetaceans.

O.R.C.A. now begins Phase II, a six-month process to prepare a correct living situation and proceed with proposals and permits. Joe and Rosie in the interim are housed at the Dolphin Research Center, an educational facility in the Florida Keys that has several dolphins in permanent residence, houses dolphins in transit and offers learning laboratories for the public. A pod in residence there offers a good break for Joe and Rosie from years of research in preparation for readaptation and release.

An invitation to share ideas, experience, and financing is extended to I.C. readers who see themselves as part of this vision. Development and financing of a release program involves a committed group who see the ramifications of such an effort. O.R.C.A. has relied primarily to date on the personal resources of those directly involved in the care of Joe and Rosie (Phase I) and these same individuals will continue to work on a volunteer basis. At this time (Phase II), additional participation and financial assistance is needed for the continued care of the dolphins and for the further development of the release program. We speak to those of you who have benefited from dolphin research literature and who have been affected by visits with children to aquariums. We speak to those who have responded with concern for animals they have seen in unhealthy situations, or who have known of the confinement and death of stranded animals due to lack of release expertise. O.R.C.A., in assuming stewardship for Joe and Rosie, invites participation from I.C. readers who see this effort as part of the work we have to do together as a Human/Dolphin community. How this proceeds will depend on the response of the Marine Mammal Commission, the dolphins, and each of us. It is a time when the action, interest and dreams of private individuals can truly have an effect.

O. R. C. A.

Proposal

A. To properly reacclimate to the open sea two dolphins, Joe and Rosie, who have been in captivity for five years;

B. To monitor their behavior in open water for a designated period of time after acclimation;

C. To evaluate and determine success of the readaptation program and application of findings.

Job Opportunity

O.R.C.A. needs someone who must:

A. Be able to work as part of a team at Florida Keys facility for at least one year.

B. Be a qualified research participant within the marine mammal scientific community.

C. Work in the spirit of this unique effort in return for a comfortable living situation and salary appropriate to individual needs and O.R.C.A. resources.

D. Demonstrate a willingness to document the project on both a human and technical level so that the results can be communicated broadly.

E. Be sensitive to the preferences and needs of two (or more) dolphins involved.

Replies should be sent no later than July 4, 1986 to O.R.C.A., Attention Virginia Coyle or James Hickman, 3105 Washington Street, San Francisco, CA 94115; (415) 332-6491. Tax-deductible contributions may be sent and made payable to Tides Foundation/O.R.C.A., 873-A Sutter Street, San Francisco, CA 94109. Thank you.

Dedication

Humans as "totems" for the protection of animals, stewards of wildlife—we are living in a time where if we do not make the conscious effort to be responsible to and for what we have, we will lose it. This issue of the newsletter is dedicated to all the individual forces on our planet who are working towards the balance of environment for the benefit of all sentient beings.

I.C. wishes to acknowledge with gratitude the efforts and support of: H. S. Dakin Company, Slifka Foundation, Threshold Foundation, the sponsors of the Baja trip, Bernie Willard of Argotec, and Dennis Hasselberg.

Animal Ambassador: Elephant as Totem

In April of this year I was asked to give a presentation of the "Tellington Touch" (a therapy based on the method of Moshe Feldenkrais) to keepers at the Honolulu Zoo, and to see if I could help Empress, the oldest elephant in captivity. Empress was fifty-four years old, had served in the zoo for many years, and had very bad abscesses on the bottoms of her feet from standing on concrete for so long. When I first saw her she was leaning on her trunk over the concrete fence trying to take the weight off her feet. She obviously was in much pain and had tears running down her magnificent face. I went in with her and let her touch me with the tip of her trunk to get acquainted. She was very gentle. I worked softly on all four tree-trunk-like legs and the bottoms of her feet. The abscesses had at times exuded pieces of bone. She seemed appreciative of the touch and the attention, but I sensed that she did not want to live any longer, and would be much happier to pass on to "elephant heaven." The zoo keepers had tried many ways of alleviating her pain using drugs, boots, onion compresses, and relief periods on grass under a giant shade tree. But the years on concrete had taken a terrible toll and her enclosure had no soft place to lie down nor soft dirt to blow with her trunk on her body.

I spoke with the director about this and he said they had recently put sand in the enclosure to alleviate this problem. The "sand" was sharp, small chunks of volcanic rock, piled in the center of the enclosure, and scattered on the concrete, painful to walk and stand on.

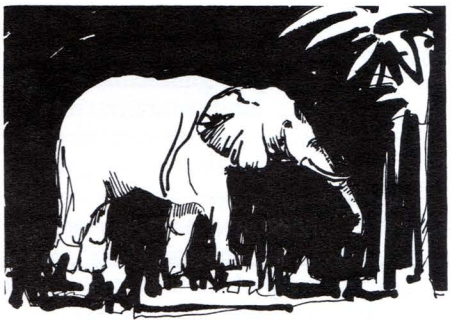
That night Empress appeared to me in a dream asking for release from service. She loved the people who had come to visit with her over the years but the pain was too great. I visualized a gentle parting with her and a memorial service to honor her passing.

Unfortunately, there was no memorial service. She was put down the next day without a chance for that recognition. I was told by a zookeeper that they had selected a spot on the zoo grounds for the procedure. However, one-hundred feet before this location she lay down and quietly waited—apparently knowing their intent. It was reported in the Honolulu paper that her body was bulldozed into a landfill, leaving a void and an unfulfilled opportunity for saying good-bye and thank you to her wonderful spirit.

I shall never forget Empress and the sensitivity with which she touched me. I have been promised by several Hawaiians that they will not give up until the cinders are substituted with sand for the elephants coming to replace her at the zoo.

For me her passing is an opportunity to rethink how we deal with the loss of animals who grace our lives with their presence. To be with them at the time of transition, to honor their gifts and their passing, and to allow both our sorrow and joy to surface are all important parts of completion with our four-legged friends. Our connection with them, as with each other, is one to be cherished in all its phases. The transition of Empress reminded me once again of how our animal friends serve as ambassadors and as teachers in the dance of life.

Linda Tellington-Jones



Linda is a regular contributor to the I.C. Newsletter *and part of the I.C. family. She is best known for her work with horses (T.E.A.M. or Tellington-Jones Equine Awareness Method) and has become established as a knowledgeable therapist working with zoo animals. Her work has brought her international acclaim and numerous invitations to teach in various parts of the world, including the Soviet Union. She began an outreach program called Animal Ambassadors International to help people express the importance of animals in their own lives and to open avenues of communication between people and nations. The program has been successful in facilitating correspondence between Soviet and American animal lovers. For more information about Linda's work, please contact her at: Box S-999, Carmel, CA 93921.*